

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 08590

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: ELAB, SP
SUBJECT: SUAREZ' VIEW ON THE LABOR SITUATION IN SPAIN

REF: A. MADRID 8589, B. MADRID 6750

1. DURING A CONVERSATION WITH ME JULY 24, PRIME MINISTER ADOLFO SUAREZ EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE PRESENT STATE OF ORGANIZED LABOR IN SPAIN AND SAID IT WAS CRITICAL THAT SOMETHING BE DONE TO MAKE CHANGES IN THE DIRECTION OF BUILDING A STRONG, FREE, DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNION MOVEMENT, OR AT LEAST GIVING PEOPLE ALTERNATIVES TO THE PRESENT UGT, WHICH IS ESSENTIALLY A MARXIST LABOR UNION, OR THE WORKERS COMMISSIONS (CCOO), THE LEADERSHIP OF WHICH IS TIED TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY.
2. SUAREZ SAID THAT THE UGT, WHICH IS CLEARLY IDENTIFIED AS A POLITICAL ARM OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY, HAS THUS FAR PROVEN IN PRACTICE TO BE FAR MORE POLITICAL AND FAR MORE RADICAL THAN THE WORKERS COMMISSIONS. HE SAID ALTHOUGH THE LEADERSHIP OF THE WORKERS COMMISSIONS IS OPENLY COMMUNIST, THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERSHIP IS NOT. AS A MATTER OF FACT THEY ARE VERY
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LOCAL OR REGIONAL IN THEIR MAKEUP AND ARE CONCERNED PRIMARILY WITH TRADE UNION ISSUES. HE SAW THE UGT AS A MILITANTLY MARXIST GROUP AND ONE WHICH CERTAINLY DID NOT SHARE THE AIMS OF FREE, DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNIONISM.

3. SUAREZ SAID TO DEAL WITH THE PRESENT SITUATION

HE WAS CONSIDERING TWO SEPARATE ACTIVITIES. THE FIRST IS TO ORGANIZE ON A PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL BASIS, LABOR ASSISTANCE OFFICES, TO WHICH ANY WORKING PERSON COULD TURN FOR ASSISTANCE AND COUNSEL REGARDING MATTERS WHICH UNIONS NORMALLY TAKE UP, SUCH AS WAGES, WORKING HOURS, WORKING CONDITIONS GENERALLY, AND RELATIONS WITH EMPLOYEES. THIS ORGANIZATION, WHICH WOULD BE GOVERNMENT-FINANCED, WOULD LET THE WORKER KNOW THAT HE DID NOT HAVE TO JOIN A COMMUNIST OR MARXIST UNION IN ORDER TO HAVE HIS RIGHTS DEFENDED. HE EXPECTED THAT THIS PROGRAM WOULD START SHORTLY AND WOULD SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY (REFTEL B).

4. SUAREZ SAW AN EVEN MORE CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ORGANIZATION OF A NEW LABOR FEDERATION, WHICH HE THOUGHT WOULD COME INTO BEING IN ABOUT OCTOBER. HE SAID THIS NEW GROUP WAS TO BE TOTALLY NON-POLITICAL. HE DID NOT WANT A TRADE UNION WING OF HIS POLITICAL PARTY. FROM HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN TRYING TO ORGANIZE THE GROUP, HE FELT SURE THAT IT WOULD SHARE THE IDEOLOGY AND THE WAY OF THINKING OF THE UCD, THAT IS, IT WOULD BE COMMITTED TO FREE ENTERPRISE, TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, AND TO THE BUILDING OF A FREE SOCIETY. HE HOPED THIS WOULD OFFER WORKERS A GENUINE ALTERNATIVE TO THE LABOR ORGANIZATIONS PRESENTLY IN EXISTENCE. HE FELT THAT

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BOTH THE UGT MARXISTS AND THE COMMUNISTS WERE MISTAKEN IN BELIEVING THAT A CLASS STRUGGLE WAS DOMINANT FACTOR OF LIFE IN SPAIN. ON THE CONTRARY, HE FELT THAT THE ORDINARY WORKING MAN IN SPAIN HAD A SENSE OF HIS OWN DIGNITY AND EQUALITY AND WAS PREPARED TO WORK WITHIN THE SYSTEM WHILE EXPECTING THAT HE WOULD BE PROPERLY COMPENSATED FOR HIS EFFORTS. HE THOUGHT THAT THIS PROVIDED THE BASIS FOR BUILDING THE NEW ORGANIZATION. SUAREZ FELT THAT SINCE THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS, BUT NOT THE MANAGEMENT, OF THE WORKERS COMMISSIONS ARE INTERESTED ONLY IN TRADE UNION MATTERS, THE NEW ORGANIZATION SHOULD HAVE SOME SUCCESS IN WINNING OVER MANY OF THOSE MEMBERS. HE FELT THAT IN TIME THIS WAS THE BEST PROMISE FOR BUILDING FREE, DEMOCRATIC, NON-POLITICAL TRADE UNIONS IN THE COUNTRY. HE HOPED THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO HAVE SOME COOPERATION WITH US IN THIS IN THE TIME AND MANNER THAT SEEMED MOST APPROPRIATE.

5. COMMENT. WE WILL BE SHARING OUR FURTHER THOUGHTS WITH THE DEPARTMENT ON THIS MATTER AFTER THE RETURN TO SPAIN THIS WEEKEND OF ARTURO MOYA, WHO HAS EVIDENTLY

BEEN DESIGNATED BY SUAREZ TO BE THE PRIME GUIDING FORCE
WITHIN THE GOS OF THIS ALTERNATIVE NON-MARXIST LABOR
MOVEMENT. TODMAN

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